

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, October 5, 2012

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November 1: [PARCC readiness](#) updates due

Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott:

1. RIDE receives federal grant to improve training systems for people working with students who have disabilities

We received the great news this week that the U.S. Department of Education has awarded us a \$674,000 grant to work with our partners at the Sherlock Center, at Rhode Island College, to advance the knowledge and skills of educators working with children who receive special-education services. As we describe the project in our grant application:

The purpose of this project is to improve outcomes related to academic, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning for students with or at risk for disabilities by enhancing the statewide system for personnel preparation and professional development and by increasing the capacity of school-district personnel and pre-service candidates to implement a Multi-tiered System of Support consisting of prevention, high-quality instruction, evidence-based intervention, and evaluation to improve outcomes for children with or at risk for disabilities.

You can read the U.S. Department of Education release on the grant, at:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/24-million-grants-awarded-22-states-improve-training-systems-help-children-disab>

2. Highlander Charter School receives federal grant for partnership with East Providence schools

As part of our commitment to providing innovative and high-quality education for all Rhode Island students, we support and encourage community partnerships between our charter public schools and our traditional public schools. In light of that commitment, I am very pleased that the U.S.

Department of Education has awarded the Highlander Charter School a highly competitive Charter School Exemplary Collaboration Grant for \$170,000. This grant will link Highlander with the East Providence public schools to share and develop ideas and practices. Highlander was one of only seven charters to receive grants in this round of funding from the Charter Schools Program of the U.S. Department of Education. All of us at RIDE commend the teachers and leaders at Highlander and in East Providence for pursuing this opportunity to advance the achievement of all of their students.

From RIDE:

3. Information sessions scheduled for potential charter-school application teams

Please see this notice from our Office of Transformation:

The charter-school office at RIDE will be offering two regional information sessions for potential 2014 Charter School Application Teams to provide an overview of how to apply to begin a charter public school, including: charter-school application requirements, common questions about the application process, and a discussion about start-up and implementation funding opportunities through our Charter School Program and Race to the Top grants. Please feel free to share this invitation widely with your networks:

Wednesday (October 10) @ The Compass Charter School, 537 Old North Rd., Kingston. 6 – 7 p.m.

Thursday (October 11) @ Paul Cuffee High School, 544 Elmwood Ave., Providence. 6 – 7 p.m.

If you would like to attend one of the sessions, please respond by the end of the day **Tuesday** (October 9), by e-mail, to Sheila.galamaga@ride.ri.gov .

In the meantime, we encourage you to visit the charter-school page on the RIDE website for updated information on the application process and existing funding opportunities:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/charterschools/applications.aspx>

Reminder. **December 1** is the deadline for submission of the Charter School Prospectus to apply for a 2014 charter school opening. This submission is a critical step in the charter-school application process, as it determines an applicant's readiness to submit a full application by March 1, 2013.

4. Sustainable Schools Summit scheduled for November 2

Please see this notice from our Office of Statewide Efficiencies:

RIDE, in conjunction with the Rhode Island Sustainable Schools Network, Rhode Island College, and the Apeiron Institute, extends an invitation to educators, students, principals, facilities managers, parents, and other education stakeholders to attend the Rhode Island Sustainable Schools Summit, on Friday, **November 2**, from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m., at Rhode Island College, 600 Mount Pleasant Ave., Providence 02908. The summit will showcase successful local initiatives and provide

participants with the knowledge, resources, and support network to move their schools toward greater sustainability in their facilities and their curriculum.

Please visit the Apeiron Institute [Web site](#) for more information and to register for this event.

5. Draft Social Studies GSEs posted for review

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

We are in the final stages of an initiative to expand the Civics GSEs to include strands in geography and economics and to expand the current Historical Perspectives strand. The draft strands have been finalized and are posted online for public and LEA review through **October 24**.

We recommend that review of the GSEs and glossary be conducted through a group review process. Directions for the review process can be found at www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CIVICS/GSEsExp/GSEs_Review_Directions.doc and on the first page of each review-form packet.

The draft GSEs review forms have been posted by grade span and content area, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/civics.aspx.

An overview of the expansion process and timeline can also be found on that page.

Please contact Kamlyn Keith (kamlyn.keith@ride.ri.gov) if a team of educators from your LEA or school is planning on reviewing the GSEs or if you have any questions about the review process.

6. RIDE offers professional development on ELA/Literacy Common Core State Standards

Please see the following announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

We are pleased to be able to offer professional development (PD) regarding the critical areas of focus within the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA)/Literacy. PD sessions will be offered throughout the current school year and will be dedicated to assisting LEAs in developing a cadre of LEA or school leaders to facilitate professional development at the school or LEA level. Therefore, each LEA will be allotted a specific number of spaces across all of the PD sessions. This structure will enable an LEA to set its own priorities according to its individual needs. Specific information regarding the dates, locations, and topics of the PD sessions will be provided at the Assistant Superintendents/Curriculum Directors Network Meeting on Thursday (October 11) at RIDE.

Additionally, we will be offering these same PD sessions on select Saturdays throughout the school year as well as in late June 2013 for individual educators across Rhode Island to build their understanding of the critical areas within the ELA/Literacy CCSS. Information regarding these “open” sessions will be forthcoming.

For questions regarding this ELA/Literacy CCSS professional development, please contact, Diane Girard, at diane.girard@ride.ri.gov, or Colleen O'Brien, at colleen.obrien@ride.ri.gov.

7. RIDE posts list of approved alternative assessments that can count toward meeting graduation requirements

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

As you are probably aware, under current regulations students – beginning with the Class of 2014 – must attain the level of partially proficient or higher on the grade-11 New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) mathematics and reading tests in order to meet the state-assessment requirement for earning a high-school diploma.

Professional standards and legal precedent have established that when a state assessment is used as part of a conjunctive system of graduation requirements it is necessary to provide students with multiple opportunities to meet the assessment requirement. The Regents Secondary School Regulations outline a sequential series of opportunities that includes retaking the state assessment as well as meeting the requirement through performance on approved alternative standardized measures of student achievement.

We have posted a list of approved alternative assessments and the minimum acceptable scores for each assessment (available at

http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/sec_regs.aspx).
The complete testing protocol is described in the May 2011 Secondary Guidance, which is available at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/sec_regs.aspx.

Please contact Sharon Lee (sharon.lee@ride.ri.gov) if you have questions about the approved alternative assessments.

8. Feedback welcomed on Educator Performance and Support System

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Earlier this week (Tuesday and Wednesday), some Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) users experienced intermittent difficulty accessing the system. Please note that neither the EPSS nor RIDEmap were down. The issue was due to the complex exchange of data between the EPSS and RIDEmap. RIDE and the vendors who helped develop both systems are taking the necessary steps to avoid future access issues.

Beginning with the current school year, RIDE accepts only evaluation data reported through EPSS in order to ensure secure transfers and confidentiality. While most early feedback on the user experience with the EPSS has been positive, we acknowledge that the system will improve over time. We are committed to the ongoing improvement of the EPSS (we have a future enhancement wish list already), and we look forward to feedback about your experience with the system.

The RIDEmap help desk has been established to assist educators with any questions or issues related to the EPSS (or any of the other RIDEmap systems). Educators can submit a ticket to the help desk by using the RIDEmap support page, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov/>

9. New Student Learning Objective Quality Check Tool, guidance document available for educators, evaluators

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

A new Student Learning Objective Quality Check Tool has been developed to help educators and evaluators effectively review and revise Student Learning Objectives. The one-page tool includes guiding questions for each component of a Student Learning Objective (e.g., objective statement, rationale, targets) to help determine whether or not that section is acceptable or in need of revision. The Student Learning Objective Tool was adapted from a similar resource produced by the Warwick Public Schools.

An updated version of the “Indicators of a Strong Student Learning Objective” document is also available on the RIDE website. It has been reformatted and organized into the three main criteria of a Student Learning Objective (priority of content, rigor of target, and quality of evidence) to better support teachers and administrators as they write and review Student Learning Objectives.

Educators can access both Student Learning Objective resources on the RIDE website at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx>.

10. Updated responses to frequently asked questions about the Rhode Island Model available on website

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Responses to almost 100 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the Rhode Island Model for educator evaluations are now available on the RIDE website. The questions and answers are organized into major categories, including: Teacher Professional Practice FAQs; Student Learning FAQs; and EPSS FAQs. The responses represent our latest guidance, and we will be adding to the FAQs throughout the school year.

Educators can access the updated FAQs on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/RIModelFAQ.aspx>

11. Webinar, training on Virtual Learning Math Modules to improve mathematics achievement

Please see this message from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

High-school students who score a 1 on the October 2012 NECAP assessments are expected to retake the NECAP assessment in October (2013) of their senior year. Students can meet the assessment graduation requirement by scoring a 2 or by showing progress toward proficiency on the retake. Guidance that details the testing process and the multiple opportunities for students is available on the RIDE website, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/documents/Regulation/2011/Guidance_Final_2011.doc.

A progress plan must be developed outlining the additional academic instruction or support for those students scoring a 1 on their grade-11 NECAP assessments:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/progress_plan/materials.aspx.

Virtual Learning Math Modules (VLMM) may be used as one of the identified interventions in a student's progress plan.

Sixteen LEAs have participated in the VLMM trainings to date as we move into the full scale-up phase of the project. We encourage all LEAs to participate in a training session to gain an understanding of the VLMM and the various ways to implement this blended-learning opportunity:

VLMM Update Webinar – **Thursday** (October 11), 3 – 4 p.m.

Registration:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/596109126>

This webinar is designed to bring VLMM Team members and educators who have participated in a face-to-face training session up to date on changes since the spring and summer pilot trainings. New VLMM support resources will be made available.

Face-to-Face VLMM Training Sessions – TBD

Contact Holly Walsh (holly.walsh@ride.ri.gov) if you are interested in attending a face-to-face VLMM training session.

From other state agencies:

**12. School Safety and Mitigation Conference
scheduled for November 1**

Please see this message from the Emergency Management Agency:

Registration is now open for the 2012 School Safety Mitigation Conference, taking place November 1, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Warwick. Invited attendees include crisis/response team members, school principals, faculty, district administrators, facility administrators, community first responders, school resource officers, and related personnel. Space is limited, so please return registration forms by **October 25**. The registration form and agenda are available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/Funding/construction/default.aspx>

Other:

13. Bright Night Providence conducting auditions

Please see this message from Bright Night Providence:

Bright Night Providence, Rhode Island's largest New Year's Eve Celebration, is proud to present the 2nd Annual "Bright Night's Got Talent" Competition.

We are searching for Rhode Island students ages 6 through 19 who would like an opportunity to showcase their special talent (singing, dancing, poetry, magic, acting, etc.). There will be auditions for all who are interested, concluding with the grand prize in each age category: a paid appearance/performance at Bright Night Providence!

This event is open to both individual and group performances. Due to time constraints, each performance will be allotted a four-minute time slot. Finalists will get a 10-minute performance showcase at Bright Night Providence, and a \$100 performance fee.

Where: Location to be disclosed upon registering.

When: 1st or 2nd weekend in December

For more information, see:

<http://www.brightnight.org>

14. Agency seeks entries for Christopher Columbus Awards

Please see this message from the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation:

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation, a federal-government agency, is pleased to announce the national Call for Entries for the 2012-13 *Christopher Columbus Awards* program. Now in its 17th year, the awards challenge sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities.

Today's middle school students are the Innovation Generation—everyday kids with untapped potential who are creative problem solvers. Unlocking that potential is the mission of the *Christopher Columbus Awards* program, a cutting edge national competition that combines science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) with community problem solving in a real-world setting.

Teams of up to four students and a coach identify a community issue and use the scientific process to solve it. Finalist teams win an all-expense-paid trip to Walt Disney World® where they attend the Christopher Columbus Academy and compete for gold medals, cash prizes and the \$25,000 *Columbus Foundation Community Grant*.

The program is free to enter. All relevant information about how to enter the competition, including the Entry Components and Checklist, Entry Forms, Student Guide and Coach's/Teacher's Guide, are available online at:

www.christophercolumbusawards.com.

The deadline for receipt of the complete entry packet is
February 4, 2013.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default
.aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx)